Interview with Joseph Walter Neubert

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

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Interviewed by: Self

Introduction

This is not intended to be an autobiography — and much less a history. Few of the dates and few of the names in it will stand close inspection. All I want to do is to say that I have just completed thirty years in the Foreign Service f the United States — and enjoyed almost every minute of it. There was work — and some responsibility — but it wasn't all work. There was a lot of fun, too. It is primarily that that I would like to share with you.

In my mind, there is little doubt that the period from World War II until today was the Golden Age of the American Foreign Service. All of us who entered the Foreign Service after the war could see unlimited horizons. The Service had taken no one in during the war and the post-war explosion of new embassies was upon us. We all knew we were going to have fruitful and productive careers — with rapid advancement. And, by and large, we did. But, as I say, it wasn't all work.

I suspect the world has gotten much more staid during these thirty years. But perhaps it is just that I have gotten more upright. Anyway, as I look back, the earlier years were the gayest. Even so, the later years were also fun.

People sometimes ask me why I have enjoyed the Foreign Service so much. My answer is simple. The work has always been different, place and function changed every two or

three years, and I have never lived among a people I didn't love. This is important. Today, the Foreign Service Officer has some control over where he is sent. In my day, he didn't. He went where he was told to go. Even so, I never encountered a people I didn't come to love. Why? Because I found, in the end, they all had a sense of humor, an ability to laugh at themselves and at us.

Part 1. First Posting

I am a freak in one respect — I decided when a junior at Bothell High School (not far from Seattle, Washington) to become a diplomat. I wrote a “research” paper on the subject. I then entered the University of Washington, where my faculty advisor told me (correctly) I had no chance unless I went to an Ivy League college. This led me to take a Yale scholarship examination and eventually I entered Yale in the fall of 1941. The war intervened and, after three years as a private in the Army, I was eventually graduated from Yale in June 1947. In the meantime, I had taken the Foreign Service examinations, and became a Foreign Service Officer in August 1947.

Perhaps because the Army had, in a misguided moment (those tanks I served in didn't speak Serbian) taught me Serbo-Croatian, I was first posted to Belgrade, where I arrived in December 1947.

But perhaps we should back up a moment. We (I and a number of my colleagues) crossed the Atlantic on the old America — then the Blue Ribbon holder. It was a far cry from the troop ships I, at least, was used to. And we all had great fun dancing on rolling decks with willing damsels. Or was it the other way round? Anyway, some of us got to Paris en route to points farther East.

When, finally, the Orient Express moved out toward Belgrade, I was ready to cope with any lovely spy who presented herself. None did. The only interest was provided at Trieste

when the Italian train crew came through and removed all toilet paper and light bulbs before turning the dark hulk over to the Yugoslavs.

Arrival in Belgrade was something of a shock. I had, of course, expected some kind of welcoming committee — perhaps not the Ambassador — but someone. There was no one. But there were about three feet of snow on the ground. Well, after an hour or so, I managed to get my baggage together and onto a horse-drawn sledge and all of us went off up the hill to “the best hotel in town” — to wit, the Hotel Moskva (what else?).

It turned out that the Moskva (whatever its earlier name was) was a posh, pre-war affair in which (astonishingly) they had reserved for me the bridal suite — with a twelve-foot bathtub — sunken, yet. I enjoyed a good soaking and a peaceful night but, come morning, decided that a newly-fledged diplomat couldn't afford the tariff. So I hied myself off to the Embassy and, making my number, inquired after more reasonable quarters.

The administrative officer apologized that I had not been met and suggested I move into a room on the top floor of the Embassy, a floor also occupied by the Embassy guards. I readily agreed; it was free. What I didn't know was that it was also infested with bedbugs. I soon found out and, a few days later, was happy to move into one room in a Yugoslav home, suggested by the Foreign Office. There, I couldn't have been happier. The owners were wonderful people and made me feel at home.

This was not, however, the end of my connection with the top floor of the Embassy. In those days, we did not have Marine Guards. The guards of the Embassies were civilians. As I recall we had four such guards in a former bank building, in which the Consular Section (where I worked) was on the ground floor (with a separate entrance) and the Chancery was on the fourth floor with the guards quartered on the fifth floor. Not, perhaps, an ideal security arrangement. But there it was. Anyway, it just happened that I, the new Consul, Basil McGowan, and a new security guard, Mitch Styma, all arrived on post more or less simultaneously. A day or two later, Styma, making his rounds one evening, came

into the Consular Section (which, as I said, had its own entrance) to find this unknown "person" rifling the safe. He promptly hauled out his .45 Automatic and ordered the "thief" to cease and desist "or else." McGowan, a red-headed (if graying) Scotsman, told him to get lost. Styma cocked his pistol. McGowan suggested they call the Ambassador. The Ambassador, Cavendish Cannon, spoke to Styma, told him McGowan was all right, and asked him please not to shoot.

This might have ended the whole affair. But more was to come. The guards living on the top floor (all bachelors) were fond of picking up girls, usually at the Lotus, the only bar in town, and taking them up to their rooms to spend the night. To do this, they had to take them past the guard desk on the fourth floor. Styma objected to this and laid down the law — no more when he was on duty, at any rate.

Well, a few evenings later, when Styma was on duty, the doorbell rang and he opened it. There he saw one of the other guards and an unknown woman. He roared, "God damn it, Joe, I've told you not to bring your whores through when I'm on duty."

Joe had no chance to reply. The woman drew herself up haughtily and said, "Sir, I am Mrs. McGowan. I have come for the mail." Relations between the McGowans and Styma never thawed.

My own relations with Styma became very close and I still regard him as one of the finest people I have encountered. He was born in New Jersey but went back to Poland with his parents before the war. He was educated in Poland but was an American citizen and did courier runs to Lisbon until the fall of Poland. Then he returned to the U.S. and served in the OSS during the war, dropping into occupied Europe a number of times. After the war he became, as I have said, a civilian guard. He recently retired from the Foreign Service as Administrative Officer at our Embassy in East Berlin. A wonderful man.

I remember particularly his activities in connection with the "disappearance" of my secretary in Belgrade. At that time I was the vice consul in charge of citizenship matters

and was busy interviewing dozens of claimants to American citizenship each day — all in Serbian. The reason for so many claimants was that thousands of Serbian emigrants to the U.S. in the twenties returned to the “old country” in the thirties to avoid the Depression. And all of their children, born in the U.S., had possibly or probably valid claims to U.S. citizenship.

Anyway, my secretary, a perfectly sensible American girl, failed to show up one day and I assumed she was ill. When she didn't show up the second day, I initiated inquiries. It then turned out she was being held hostage in her apartment by a man (with a gun) who wanted “political asylum” or else. Well! Consternation! Then the Ambassador decided to send Styma to deal with the problem. He did. He suckered the guy into opening the door, kicked it in, disarmed him, and carted him out into the country and booted him out. Nothing like having a few of the (well-trained) tough guys around.

One might have thought that life would have gotten easier in Belgrade once Stalin and Tito broke off relations in June 1948. Far from it. The thaw on the Yugoslav side took years. But there was some interest during that period, nevertheless. For one thing, the Embassy — that is to say, an FSO named Charles G. Stefan — predicted in early June that Tito and Stalin were on the outs. In June the Charg# d'Affaires, R. Borden Reams, bought the argument and cabled Washington. The skies fell in! Washington refused to believe it. So did the Ambassador, an otherwise sensible man off at a conference in Rome. The Department demanded withdrawal of this telegram and sent Llewellyn Thompson, then Deputy Assistant Secretary for Europe, to Belgrade to make Reams see the light. Reams refused and Charlie Stefan and I drove Thompson to Budapest as a placating gesture. The morning after we arrived, the three of us were walking to the Legation from the Bristol Hotel and saw newspapers (otherwise unintelligible) with “Tito” in the headlines. We bought one and sat on the curb outside the Legation garage while a chauffeur translated and told us Tito had been bounced from the Cominform. Thompson had the grace to lean over and shake Charlie's hand and say, “You were right and I was wrong.”

It wasn't until shortly before I left Yugoslavia in January 1950 that the Yugoslavs began to come to our parties or have anything to do with us. One party, given by the then Charg# d'Affaires Bob Reams had for me three amusing outcomes.

First, I had never, until then, played poker. But Bob insisted I join in a game involving a number of visiting Air Force officers and Cy Sulzberger. I reluctantly agreed, with the proviso I could, from time to time, consult with the counsel. I did so, and for a few hands, I just lost moderately. Then, I was dealt, in a straight draw poker hand, four aces. I consulted with counsel. And asked for only one card. Needless to say, I won five hundred dollars on that one hand. I have never played poker since.

Second, I met a very attractive Yugoslav woman — blonde, well-made. She insisted we dance repeatedly and, then, asked me to lunch with her two days hence. Agreed.

Third, I got into an ideological argument with a Yugoslav party official about my age (28), who insisted we go to his apartment to settle matters. Agreed.

First things first, I took the Yugoslav ideologue to his apartment. Astonishing. He had a large pleasant new apartment. But it was totally devoid of furniture! In what I assume would have been the living room, there was a thin mattress on the floor in the corner — and a rumpled blanket. In what might have been the bedroom, there was a basket of grapes — and a jug of wine. Strewn equitably about were grape skins. And, beside the mattress, a German pistol (loaded?).

Well, we sat on the mattress and ate grapes and drank wine and argued capitalism/communism until dawn. I don't think we persuaded each other of anything — but it seemed great fun at the time. Especially since he didn't shoot me.

The invitation to lunch was something else again. I had been waiting for an international “femme fatale” to set her sights on me and I was sure this was it. So I got all gussied up

and went off to the assignation in, as it turned out, an apartment across the square from the Opera.

I knocked on the door and my new-found friend ushered me in, clad in a lovely dress of Western cut. We sat politely in a roomy salon and had Scotch and munchies. Then she ushered me to the dining room and we had a pleasant lunch with wine, which she served. All very nice. Then we returned to the salon for coffee and liqueurs. My hostess vanished for a bit. I sat on the sofa and savored the coffee. She returned — you've guessed it — in a filmy negligee. She was attractive. She sat next to me and caressed my thigh. I was ready to reveal all the state secrets I knew (none) and then the garlic and odor of stale perspiration hit me. Suddenly, I wasn't ready to reveal I didn't know any state secrets. I just up and fled.

As a matter of fact, on a higher plane, there were, even before this, amusing moments in our relations with the Yugoslavs. It is worth recalling that Tito was not always our friend. In early 1947 his air force (such as it was and it didn't take much) shot down some of our DC-3 mail planes from Vienna to Trieste and, also in 1947, there were efforts by the Yugoslavs to seize Zone A (Trieste) from the U.S. and British. These efforts were turned aside.

Still, in August 1949, it was somewhat astonishing when the Yugoslav Foreign Minister called in the Ambassadors of Yugoslavia's “friends,” i.e., the U.S., U.K., and France, to ask them to protect Yugoslavia from the Soviet Union. I became involved in this as interpreter for Ambassador Cannon and I remember his insistence on being sure this was exactly what the Yugoslavs were asking. It was.

Whatever else I was to Ambassador Cannon, he early on decided that I was his “nightclub attach#.” This meant that I had the dubious pleasure (there was only one nightclub) of accompanying those few American visitors who wanted to see the Lotus to the Lotus. Some were not satisfied with the faded glories of the Lotus and wanted more action. I

remember once in the summer of 1949 that Congressman Wayne Hayes, then every junior member of the House, came to Belgrade. I was his “control officer” or “escort officer” or whatever. I was supposed to keep him happy. Given the reports we had had of his adventures in Prague, pursuing a young lady (naked) down the hotel corridor, this seemed like a large order. Anyway, he soon lived up to advance reports. He asked me to have the American secretary assigned to him come to his hotel room for fun and games.

I suppose I might have agreed to do what I could, but, as it happened, this young lady-and I (a bachelor) were happily engaged in our own affairs. So I told Wayne to arrange his own business — I was no pimp. Our relationship was never the same again.

In the summer of 1949, I went on a jeep tour of Montenegro and Dalmatia (mainly because nothing but a jeep could make the trip). I went (alone) down through Cetinje to the coast and up through Dubrovnik. I say “alone” with some hesitation because I was pursued by another (secret police) jeep (probably stolen from the Embassy). Anyway, when I got to Dubrovnik I stayed at the Europa Hotel — pre-war Italian. And I was the only guest. It is still there — but with more guests. In my day, I wandered alone through the town, along the walls, and fully enjoyed the place. Now, of course, it is wall-to-wall tourists — German, Italian, Austrian, American. But for three days, I had it to myself (and certain hangers on). My wife and I went back in 1967 and enjoyed the place, but shared it with thousands of others.

Presumably, the hazards of driving in Belgrade have lessened over the years. In 1949 I bought a Buick sedan ($1600) and then hired a Yugoslav chauffeur. This, it appeared, was not the thing for a Third Secretary to do. I remember the first time we drove up to the Embassy (newly removed) and, as I got out, I was gaily hailed by the Ambassador and DCM from the second floor balcony. Needless to say, I drove myself from then on. Besides, I thought I could drive and my chauffeur couldn't.

But perhaps I was wrong. A few months later, I was proceeding home one night and suddenly the bottom fell out of everything. We were just across from the Ministry of the Interior (Rankovich, in those days) and there was a huge unlit hole in the street. It blew the right front tire and scared the hell out of me. And the car had to be left for later rescue as I took a cab home.

Part 2. Algiers — or was that Tunis?

In January 1950, I was posted to Algiers after home leave. After having gotten married in Rome (another story) and having spent some time in the United States, I ended up in Tunis. Not exactly Algiers, but not too far away. Anyway, I was “chief of the economic section” — not hard to be since I was the whole economic section. However, everyone likes a grand title. The fact is that the local employees did all the work and I signed off on it.

These were still the days when the French controlled Tunisia — Bourguiba was “in a villa outside Paris” — and most of our work was with the French. It was only later when riots began and grenades were thrown that life became problematical.

We lived all the time in Tunisia in a French middle class enclave south of Tunis called Megrines Coteaux. Our neighbors were all French middle-class bureaucrats. The great virtue to our house was that it had been built by the Standard Oil manager before the war and had central (oil) heating. And never be confused by the ads in the tourist brochures about visiting “Sunny North Africa in Winter.” It can be hell. There is basically little heating — and lots of cold wind. Even snow. So we — with our central heating- were popular. But not without price. I became an expert on antique Esso burners and spent many an hour fiddling around, up to my elbows in oil, trying to ensure heat. Whatever else Esso had done, it had failed to leave a competent cadre behind on its machinery.

Nevertheless, this was better than my colleagues had. Mainly, they had no heat. They lived with kerosene heaters and hot rocks thrust between blankets just before bedtime.

Life in Tunisia — basically a lovely place — had a variety of interesting aspects. For one thing we were caught up in the rising Arab nationalism. On one occasion, I even received honorable mention in the New York Times when I “quelled a riot.” This was scarcely accurate. One Saturday morning I was the duty officer in our offices across the square from the Residence Generale (of the French governor). Several hundred Arabs, men and women, emerged from the Souks (Arab area) two blocks away and, in the square before the Residence Generale and our office began to demonstrate in favor of Bourguiba and the Neo Destour party. They were, predictably, set upon by the riot police and scattered. All, I should say, of the women (some 200) fled to our second floor office. I let them in. Then, when the first French riot police (with Tommy guns) arrived, I stepped (with some trepidation) in front of the door and said (imitating Petain) “Ils ne passeront pas.” Well, they didn't. Although there was a lot of teeth gashing. Finally, I said, “Take me to your leader.” And while this question was being researched, I got back inside to try to persuade a couple of hundred agitated females that they could sit down and stop worrying. We even arranged coffee and tea for them.

When I went to see the Brigadier in charge of the troops, he readily agreed that he had no quarrel with the women and would permit me to escort them back to the Arab quarter. He then withdrew his troops and the ladies and I sent to the Arab quarter, where I bade them fond farewell.

Not all my contacts with the Arabs in Tunisia were as happy — and incidentally I loved the French equally — but that is just life. For example, in the early summer of 1951, I bought a lovely 20 x 14 foot Kairouan carpet — all white. That fall, the U.S. Sixth Fleet paid a visit to Tunis — that is to say that Admiral Gardener and his carrier, the Coral Sea, anchored some miles off shore (Tunis is a shallow road stand). Anyway, at one point the Admiral and many of his colleagues ended up at my house — until about four A.M. — when the

last was fished out of the pool and sent on his way. As you can imagine, many an hors d'oeuvre was ground into my Kairouan carpet.

When I finally staggered out of bed the next morning, Ali (what else?) my cook, said that someone had stolen the carpet. He had not wished to disturb me, but he had washed the carpet and hung it out to dry, and someone had rolled it up and fled with it on a bicycle. So — that was the last I ever saw of the Kairouan carpet. But I couldn't really blame my Arab cook/housekeeper.

Ali and his wife, Fatima (what else?), were delightful people and always determined to do their best. Arabs, as a rule, had little use for pets — dogs, cats, whatever. One day a kitten appeared in the yard, terribly maltreated and near death. He (as it turned out) was spooked and I couldn't get near him. But I asked Ali to leave milk and eventually I was able to touch him and treat his really terrible wounds. Well, he — Skookurn — turned out to be a wonderful friend. He became a big Persian tomcat, who would come when called, shake hands, and generally be sociable. (What he did at night, I never inquired into.) Anyway, both Ali and Fatima became entranced with that beastie and begged me to let them keep it when we left. So we did (with reluctance; I'm still carting around one beloved old cat). Maybe there is some thing to cultural exchange, after all.

The Arab preference to ignore hard truths (rug stealing) is matched by a general preference to put the best possible face on any event. I recall one incident in Tunis that makes the point well. The Consul General had gone on leave.

Another vice consul, John Sabini, was asked (as a bachelor) to stay in the residence — located near an Arab quarter- during the Consul General's absence. He was to occupy the house with one Arab servant, Ali (what else?). John was a decorated (Navy Cross) Marine veteran and had a handy .45 pistol. He told Ali that he (Ali) could carry his shotgun in the yard (seven-foot wall) but that he could only shoot into the air (John had no intention, if thievery should take place, of getting punctured by Ali).

Well, needless to say, a few nights later, thievery, or attempted thievery, did take place. John awoke one night to hear strange noises in the garden and, taking his .45, went to investigate. About the time he arrived in the garden, he heard a shotgun blast and finally found Ali standing over an Arab, wounded in the legs, who had been attempting to steal a hose. John was furious with Ali. “I told you to shoot into the air.” Ali, looking properly contrite, said, “I did. But he jumped.”

In Tunis, I came to know a lot about such curious things as the railroad system and the olive oil business. In those days, the State Department had a program of “basic reports” on almost everything economic. So I trudged around the railroads and examined the olive oil business. I even went to examine the potash business. But, mainly, I found that I was playing bridge with the French, who ran all these things. I surely didn't object — even though I play bridge badly. But I was never sure I understood whatever was really going on.

The only report I ever wrote that amused me was one called “Tuna Fishing in Tunisia,” and that was not because of special insight but onomatopoeia. (I have to admit that visits to the fishing traps were interesting.)

Upon one occasion in 1949, I went to the south with friends to visit an Arab potentate near the oasis of Tozeur, south of Gafsa. We had been invited by a friend from Mozambique and his wife. The friend had gone on ahead. His wife and I and my wife went together, in a big, bouncy Buick convertible. About a hundred kilometers from Gafsa, we hit a rock and broke the gas tank. From there on, we raced for Gafsa against a declining fuel level, but eventually had to plug the leak with cork and tar. This ruined the carburetor and we staggered into Gafsa hours late.

The railroad people in Gafsa took over and fixed the tank and carburetor. In the meantime, we went by taxi to Tozeur and spent the night at a lovely tiny French hotel overlooking the oasis. What a delightful place. The oasis sank perhaps one hundred feet under the

desert. Perhaps a mile in diameter, it held thousands of people and trees (date palms). That evening, we listened to total quiet. The next morning we went down to total noise. And total flies. And total chaos. The question of total flies was the most important. The date palms were in sugar. And the flies were everywhere. They covered the faces of all-children and adults — and us. We brushed them off — the Arabs did not. And it didn't do us much good. So we got away as fast as we could.

The incident makes totally believable the story that the British in 1943 were able to pick up German soldiers fleeing Tunisia in Arab caravans simply by observing which “Arabs” brushed off the flies.

It was, incidentally, then that I had my first, last, and only experience with (a) sheep's eyes and (b) riding a camel. With all deference to my hosts, neither is an experience I would wish to repeat. Of the two, riding a camel (terrible beasts) was perhaps the least irritating. I say irritating because camel hair is irritating, unless you are wearing cast-iron slacks. But the sheep's eyes are psychically distressing. One sits around the large couscous tray in the tent of the chief. Then, as the guest of honor, one is given a sheep's eye and other goodies — which must be eaten before the meal begins. So you eat them. Well, I don't like oysters either. So I ate the proffered delicacies-or swallowed them. Aside from that, the reception by the Bedouins could not have been warmer.

In the summer of 1951, my wife and I went to the Isle of Djerba. This is an island that was once a rest area for the Romans. In 1951, it was remote and isolated, the Roman bridge long since destroyed. We went across it with our car on a fishing boat. While we were there, our car was the only one on the island. And we never drove it. We walked. And what a lovely place it was. The population was perhaps half Arab (red fezzes) and half Ashkenazi Jews (black fezzes). And all of them were delightful people. We stayed at the largest (and only) hotel-about 10 rooms. We spent our time walking about the island and taking pictures. Today, I understand it is a new Miami Beach, with high-rise hotels. What a pity.

During my time in Tunisia, it was necessary each year from the members of the Consular Corps to go to the Bey of Tunis's in-town palace to kiss his hand on his birthday. And for all of the local Arabs, French, etc. to do likewise. I remember well my first experience. I was standing, clad in a seersucker suit, in the courtyard as we inched our way forward under the unrelenting sun. Just in front of me was an English Consul, clad in those days in toupee and British Consular uniform, complete with medals. I observed, eventually, that all the medals were the same — and there were several. I was so gauche as to inquire why they all looked alike. He looked pityingly at me and responded, “That's reasonable, old boy. They are all alike. But it wouldn't be appropriate to wear only one, would it?” I forgave him his view of this, when he advised me that it would be wise to seize the Bey's hand and kiss my own thumb rather than a hand that had been slobbered over by so many thousands of other folk. So I did.

Some of the things that happen to you in the Foreign Service remain forever inexplicable. One evening, as I was preparing to leave the office at about seven p.m., I found I couldn't close my safe, a four drawer cabinet. One drawer would not close. After a good deal of sweating and swearing (it was, after all, martini time), I managed to get the drawer out and found it was being blocked by a small canvas bag. I took out the bag and the safe then worked properly. Satisfied on that point (among other things, I was the Security Officer), I turned to examine the bag.

Well! It contained $9,980 in twenty dollar gold pieces! After counting it, I tossed it in the safe and went home for my martini.

The next morning, I reported my “find” to the Consul General and asked if this was something we knew about. He knew nothing of it, nor did our limited files cast any light on the subject. So we told the State Department about all this and asked for (what else?) instructions. Some months later we were informed the State Department knew nothing of the matter, and it was suggested we forward the “trove” to the Treasury. We might have done so (and, indeed, eventually did), but at this point a Tunisian citizen showed

up and told us that he had just been released from a French prison where he had been incarcerated since 1945 for selling gold on the black market in Tunis. He further said he had been acting as an agent of the “American Military Mission” in Tunis and had been apprehended while selling two twenty dollar gold pieces out of $10,000 in gold pieces given him by the mission. He said he had been told the French had returned the other 498 gold pieces to the “Americans.” What the Tunisian wanted was not the money, simply a statement that we (the U.S. government) had asked him to do what he did so that he could clear his name. Well! We went back to the State Department and asked for a check with Defense and CIA (the old OSS files) to see if some such statement could be made (we were convinced that this was indeed the explanation of where the gold had come from. After all, we had inherited our safe cabinets from the Military Mission).

More months passed. Finally, we were told that no one in Washington knew anything about the whole business. So would we please stop fooling around, send the Tunisian on his way, and ship the gold to the Treasury. So we did.

Not everything in Tunis was fun and games. At one point the Consular Officer had to go off to Malta to replace an ailing officer. I had to take over his duties in Tunis. Most of this was routine. But not all. One day, I had to decide whether a visa applicant (a Hungarian, married to an American citizen) had joined the Communist Party in Hungary in 1947 of his own free will. I decided he had (and refused his visa) since Ferenc Nagy and the Smallholders were still in power at that time. The applicant in question went home and hanged himself. His wife, naturally, took umbrage. And his brother, a Tunisian resident, came to my office and, pulling an automatic pistol, wanted to shoot me. In the end, he didn't, but I had many a bad moment wondering whether I had done the right thing.

On a lighter vein, I also had troubles with the old business of “seamen and shipping: at this time. There weren't too many American ships in Tunis then. But there were some. And, off one of them, came a stranded American seaman. I became aware of him when he was

delivered to my office by two policemen one morning. He was tousled and hung-over, and clad only in trousers. No socks and no shoes.

It seems his ship had sailed the day before. He had been found, as is, in the park — would I take care of him? Or should they put him in the clink?

I talked to the sailor. He had no documents, but I decided he was for real and said I would accept responsibility for him. There began the difficulty. The cops vanished. I gave my boy a carton of cigarettes and bought him new shoes, socks, and T-shirt, and told him to hold fast until I got him a passage.

The next morning, I had the same cops, the same sailor, the same pants, back in my office. He had obviously sold the cigarettes, shirt, shoes, and socks, for more booze and here he was again. The French police were very understanding. They said they would, as friends, put him away in the prison lock-up. I agreed. They did, and there he stayed until a U.S. flag ship came in, when I could insist (legally) that he be taken as a work-a-way. Even that didn't go smoothly. I had arranged to let him out the day before, and he immediately came around to beard me in my office (not, I suppose, surprising to my colleagues who kept reminding me he was from New Haven and I was a Yale graduate) and pursued me around my desk several times as I tried to make him see light — and me, an escape. Eventually, he “worked away,” and I breathed several sighs of relief.

My career in Tunis came to a premature end. In 1949 in Belgrade, I had applied for German language and area training. During my time in Tunis I pursued a course (in French) of German language training. Then in February of 1952, I received a telegram from Washington — report to Washington by March 1 for Russian language and area training. I laughed. Surely a misprint; I had never applied for Russian training. We packed up and I rehearsed my new-found German. But, in Washington, it turned out there was no misprint. The Foreign Service Institute had had one too many German applicants and one too few Russian and had decided that, since I already knew Serbo-Croat, “I wouldn't

mind.” Anyway, mind or not, I started on March I to study Russian, and began a love affair that still enchants me.

Part 3. Moscow

There isn't any need to dwell upon Russian language training, first in Washington and then in New York. There are those happy folk who find learning a new language a lark. I'm not one of them. I find it tedious and difficult. But, in the end, I learned enough Russian to be fascinated by going to the U.S.S.R. with some confidence I could communicate with the natives.

After a bit of home leave, I left Seattle on July 4, 1953 en route to Moscow via London. The date provided me with an unexpected bonus. The United Airlines Boeing Stratocruiser I was on had only one passenger to Chicago. Me. In those easy days before terrorism, the captain invited me to ride the co-pilot's seat. And, on a beautiful cloudless day, I watched the glorious West unfold.

In New York, there was excitement of a different kind. On July 5, again in a Pan Am Stratocruiser, we left Idlewild for London. The day was very hot and the captain had elected full fuel and no stop at Shannon. Even though there were only six passengers, he barely bounced off the end of the runway (the outside temperature was over 100 F.) We skimmed out over the bay watching fishermen in boats duck and seeing sheets of spray kicked up by the propeller wash. Then, finally, we climbed away — to London. The captain had the grace to come back later and say he had misjudged the temperature equation. It is hard to believe this sort of thing in this day of excessively powered jets. No wonder they no longer care what your luggage weighs!

I spent ten days in England becoming, of all things, a spy. At least, I am sure, in Soviet eyes. I was escorted around England and told what various factories made and how to identify them. Do you know that you can tell how much electricity a power line carries? You

can, just by looking at it. Or what blue smoke coming from a factory chimney means? You can.

Anyway, I mostly enjoyed the ten days because of the country homes we stayed at. Most, it seemed, were built by Wren and were absolutely delightful. British companies may have had their faults but providing places for guests to stay was not one of them. Not the least of my pleasures was the company of a British brigadier who was later a good friend in Moscow.

In Helsinki, I joined up with Meg and Coby Swank (Coby was later Ambassador to Cambodia) for the train trip to Moscow. We paused for two days in Leningrad and stayed at the Astoria Hotel (both city and hotel later became very well known to me). Then we went on to Moscow in the creaking old prewar Wagon-Lits cars still used on that Helsinki Moscow route. But they are very comfortable, with a lavatory between each two compartments. More than can be said for the modern Red Arrow between Moscow and Leningrad. We all enjoyed our first introduction to the city founded by Peter I and our visits to the Hermitage Museum. I decided then that this had to be the best city in Russia and I believe it even more now, having lived there for the past three years.

The Embassy in Moscow was then (July 1953) the same one that recently burned. But then it was a brand-new converted apartment house into which the Embassy was just completing its move from the former Embassy on Mokhovaya Street, across from the Kremlin, next door to the National Hotel. It all seemed spacious and nicely furnished.

Both Coby Swank and I had been assigned as “political officers.” But, when we were ushered in to meet Ambassador Charles Bohlen, it became apparent that these titles had little meaning. Bohlen, clad as usual in flannel “bags” and sport jacket, informed us that Coby would be the administrative officer and I the general services officer (housekeeper). He added, grinning, “Your offices are on the first floor. If you never see me there, it means

you're doing a good job." We never saw him — but we were admittedly deflated as we left his friendly presence.

As General Services Officer (or housekeeper), I had some sixty Russians working for me, only one of whom spoke any English. The rest were carpenters, mechanics, painters, plumbers, laborers, what have you. Two things happened immediately — I changed the sign on my door to read "Genial Services" and, secondly, I set out to work with my "team." I won't say we were totally successful. We tried to keep people (including Mrs. Bohlen) happy by doing what we could. And, I think, by and large, we succeeded.

There were, of course, some people who could not be kept happy. Like the Air Force Attach# (departing) who called up in a rage one day because we had dismantled his daughter's bicycle to be shipped home. Did we realize it would cost him money to have it reassembled in the U.S.? We put it back together for him — forget the U.S. taxpayer.

I suppose (in retrospect) the most amusing job I had as GSO was washing the rugs in the main salon at Spaso House. There were, at that time, two Belgian patterned rugs under the awesome main chandelier. After fruitless negotiations with the city organization for dealing with foreign embassies we finally decided it was necessary to do it ourselves. So I and half a dozen Soviet employees got down and washed them ourselves. I can't say our results were spectacular. But I appreciated them twenty years later when one of those rugs turned up as the main rug in the salon of the Residence in Leningrad.

There were other amusing aspects to the job of GSO in Moscow. For one thing, we still had to care for "American House," a barn-like brick structure down on the river. There, the male single staff, military and state, lived. And they had their "bar" — a large and handsome area — and their quarters. Their quarters were interesting because they were in what was formerly a morgue. There was many a joke about this, but it was true. During the war, Ambassador Averell Harriman had insisted that the Soviets provide quarters

for the American military mission. Eventually, these were the quarters provided — and converted. A former morgue.

It was, in fact, the best bar in town — with dances and all. The first orchestra (of Embassy employees) was called the “Dremlin Krows.” This eventually was complained about and (the same orchestra) became known as “Joe Commode and his Four Flushers.”

My second year in Moscow involved being in the political section. This made life much easier. I received all the local press at my door every morning at eight, went back to bed, read it, then went to the office at noon to dictate the “Daily Press Telegrams.” After that, my days were my own. That is to say that I had to do a normal day's work, no matter how long it took.

Still, during this last year, there was some fun. For example, I was at a reception where Khrushchev, Malenkov, and Mikoyan were present. Like every other junior Embassy officer in town, I was breathing down their necks. Suddenly, as I was standing behind Mikoyan, he stepped backwards, and nearly broke my instep with his heel. He had the grace to turn and apologize.

Again, at the American July 4 Reception in 1955, I saw Marshall Zhukov standing grimly alone, with all his medals. I sent up and introduced myself and referred to the presence of an American Chess Team. I asked him if he played chess. He eyed me coldly. “No,” he said. I said I was surprised, that from reading Russian novels I assumed all Russian military officers played chess.

Zhukov smiled (sort of) and said that I had been reading the wrong authors. He added, “If you give me my choice between officers who play chess and officers who have never heard of the game, I will take the latter. Under conditions of modern warfare, you must decide quickly, not think — and chess players always want to think.”

It was during this year that Senator Ellender came to Moscow. Just why was never very clear. He was on a boondoggle involving U.S. aid programs of one kind or another. He had a meeting with the Embassy officers at which he spoke of the evils of aid programs to people who were not very friendly. When reminded, gently, that we had no aid programs to the Soviet Union, he ignored the point and went right on. Well. After that, he wanted to go out and visit a collective farm. For lack of anyone else, I was told off to go as his interpreter. Ha! All I knew of collective farms was what I had read in the press. That, I decided, was enough. So I went. But, it turned out, he didn't want to learn about collective farms; he wanted to tell the Russians about farming in Louisiana. Quite another kettle of fish! I learned a lot about farm terminology and Louisiana that afternoon-to my eternal embarrassment as the Foreign Office types helped me become an interpreter. Happily, “compost” was still “kompost.”

A day or two later, Ellender went to the Kremlin to meet (for whatever reason) with Mikoyan, the eternal Minister of Foreign Trade. For some reason Mikoyan deprecated “unemployment” in the U.S. and Ellender, quite sensibly, observed that in the U.S.S.R. they had a great deal of “structural unemployment,” that is, they paid people to do little or nothing. Mikoyan got red in the face and, pounding the eternal green baize table, said, “There is no unemployment in the Soviet Union, as God is my witness — although, of course, I don't believe in God.” That broke up the meeting.

Earlier that year, I had had, at a much lower level, another interesting encounter with the Soviet bureaucracy. The Catholic priest resident in Moscow, Father George Bissonette, had been declared “persona non grata” and told to go home. He left his Chevrolet in my custody. So I set out to get a driver's license. This was not simple. In those days, the Embassy required that any Embassy officer driving in the Soviet Union should — indeed, must — have a Soviet driver's license. To get one was not easy, even though the Soviets had just come to recognize that not all chauffeurs were professionals and, therefore, had to be auto mechanics as well as drivers.

A word of explanation is perhaps in order. Until 1954 or so, all drivers in the U.S.S.R. were “professionals,” driving state vehicles. About 1954 a few “lucky” Russians began to get cars of their own. Was it reasonable to insist that those too should be mechanics capable of maintaining their own vehicles mechanically? Obviously not, since the first people in the Soviet Union to have private cars were party big-wigs and their wives. So the laws were changed. A new category called “amateur chauffeur” was introduced. To get a license as an “amateur chauffeur,” it was only necessary to take an examination on “the rules of the road,” not on carburetors, etc.

I applied for a license under the new regulations, first having obtained and memorized the “Rules of the Road.” And it was well I had done so. The examination was individual. I sat across a “sand table” from three steely-eyed inspectors, chief of whom was a tight-lipped woman. We ran through all the hypothetical traffic situations on the “sand table.” Then went on to such questions as “Under what eleven conditions may you not back up?” Fortunately, having memorized the book, I could answer such otherwise unanswerable questions. Finally, however, when I began to feel all was well, the examiners stumped me.

The question, posed by the Dragon Lady, was, “You are stalled on a level railroad crossing. What do you do?” My first reaction was instantaneous, “That's not in the book.” She smiled acidly, “Even so, what do you do?” I asked, “Which direction will the train come from?” She said she couldn't say. I said I would put the car in reverse (the lowest gear) and grind it off on the battery. She refused that. I said I would get out, flip a coin to decide whence the next train, and run down the track to try and flag it down.

All to no avail. She informed me I had failed the examination and added that I could come back and do it all again in thirty days. I was not terribly amused and told her the least she could do was tell me the answer to her unauthorized question. She told me I should, under the postulated circumstances, honk the horn three times, and railroad workers would appear and remove the car from the tracks. I'm sure I looked astonished. I said, “But, what

if there are no railway workers?" She smiled, sweetly this time, "In the Soviet Union, there are always, railway workers." And, to give her due credit, I'm sure there are.

Anyway, a month later, I returned to listen to one or two perfunctory questions, and my "amateur chauffeur" license was granted with no further ado. Even the "road test" consisted of driving around the block.

My involvement with Father Bissonette led me to other adventures, prior to his enforced departure. He, obviously, was celibate and I was a bachelor. We spent a certain amount of time having dinner together, playing chess together, and so on. Whether because of our occasional get-togethers or other reasons, his chauffeur and my housekeeper (both Soviets) fell in with each other, and one day my housekeeper announced she had to go off on maternity leave. As one can imagine, I was the butt of a good deal of ribbing, but it was clear where paternity lay. Anyway, she finally left and I asked for a temporary replacement.

After a bit, the Soviet authorities provided me with a grossly fat woman, obviously fresh from the farm, but apparently good-natured. I took her on (partly because I was sure no one else would be offered). Soon, it was born in upon me that there is indeed such a thing as the "envelope" within which people prefer to operate. I am one of those people who prefers generally a distance of three to four feet between me and others. My new housekeeper accepted the "three to four" but substituted inches for feet. And she ate garlic. And she had strong body odor — mostly stale perspiration. And I couldn't stand it!

What emerged each morning was indeed a comedy. As a bachelor, I had to give her marching orders for the day. But, as I talked, she got closer and closer, until I was bouncing off her ample "front porch" and trying to evade the garlic. It got so that I would back around the dining room table-pulling out the chairs to create obstacles — as I ticked off the order of the day.

The whole thing ended rather unfortunately. I came home one evening about five to take a shower before a reception at the Ambassador's residence. As I was standing naked

in my bedroom, about to put on my robe to go shower, she trotted in for some reason or other and I told her — in mean Russian — to get lost. She flounced out and I never saw her again. But the Embassy did get a note complaining that I had used abusive language to my housekeeper. Which I had. We never answered the note. And, happily, my regular housekeeper shortly returned.

In the period after I obtained a driver's license I went off on various excursions about the Soviet Union. One of these took me and some of my friends to Kharkov, Poltava, and Kiev-and back. This was instructive for a variety of reasons. On the way Kharkov from Moscow — a distance of perhaps 600 kilometers — we met ten vehicles coming toward us and passed twelve going in the same direction. We also encountered one gasoline station. The “year of the automobile” was not yet upon the Soviet Union. Needless to say, the road was rough two-lane macadam all the way.

The road from Kharkov to Poltava and Kiev was no better. Poltava was fascinating because of the museum dedicated to Peter the First's defeat of the Swedes in 1709. But the hotel (allegedly Intourist) was less amusing. It was a two story structure left over from before the war. The rooms were commodious and each had a sink and bathtub. But the toilet facilities were something else again. There was, to be sure, a “ladies” and “gents.” But the “gents,” at least, had not been cleaned in weeks and none of the plumbing was working. To enter was to enter the Augean stables. Incredible! I, at least, elected to try the back courtyard. But so had everyone else, so this was no improvement. I gathered, without directly inquiring, that the “ladies” was no better. So we hastened on to Kiev.

I should mention, in passing, that the most common question asked us in Poltava, once folk knew we were Americans, was “Lucky Strike?” meaning, “Do you have a Lucky Strike?” All of the townspeople remembered the short-lived U.S. air base at Poltava in 1944 and remembered American cigarettes.

In Kiev we had a wonderful time. The architecture and the people seemed warmer than in Moscow. Perhaps simply because they were more southern. It started when we went up to the rooms and, bags delivered, I offered the bell-boy a tip. He looked outraged and refused. I stepped back into the room. He followed and grinned. “That was just for the 'duty' woman at the key desk.” He fidgeted, “I can always use more money. Can't we all?” So he accepted a tip. And was our good friend and consultant thereafter.

The next morning I discovered we had a flat tire. So I changed tires and took the car out to a garage to have the flat fixed. I had to return the next day. I hired a taxi. As we sped — and I mean sped — along the rough streets I asked him if he was a Communist. He almost broke up (himself and us) as he guffawed over that. Then he calmed down enough to say, “Why should I be a Communist? They think that people's arms are made to push things away. In fact, they are made to bring things to you.” This sounds perhaps innocuous. But he was demonstrating with his arms — off the wheel — as we sped along. So I am delighted he and I survived his political lecture. With the point of which, incidentally, I agree. He had it in a nutshell. You can't change human nature. Even the “new Soviet man,” I suspect, very much resembles the “old non-Soviet man.”

One of the aspects of driving around the Soviet countryside in those days was that you were always followed by KGB vehicles, a fact difficult to hide since there usually were no other vehicles for miles around. I was younger and gayer in those days, and even Chevrolets had more get up and go than Volgas (they still have) so I could resist from time to time stepping it up and watch the pursuing Volga or Volgas drop back, and vanish. Then we would turn off, stop, and have a picnic lunch, and finally wave to the Volgas as they sped painfully past. And, of course, we waved to them again as we went on after lunch. And they picked up the fresh scent. Just what it was they thought we were up to never became clear. But, perhaps it was as much a holiday for them as for us, so perhaps it all came out even.

Sometimes the business of being followed became ridiculous. Once, the Agricultural Attach#, my good friend Horace Davis, and I were making our way south of Kiev toward Odessa, across the “breadbasket” of the Soviet Union. We were not following usual roads but we were in “open” areas. Every once in a while we would stop and finger the wheat crop — not that I knew anything about wheat, ready or unready. Then we would eat. The funny thing was that in all this emptiness — and it was empty — there were one sedan, two jeeps, and one motor cycle with sidecar behind us. About two hundred yards behind us. A flat plain. Nothing for miles. Then this oddly spaced caravan. We had field glasses. They had field glasses. I watched them from time to time as they watched us from time to time. We had lunch. I was never able to observe that they did. Supermen, no doubt.

We almost got our comeuppance. I was driving. Suddenly there was a hole in the road. I swerved but a rear tire dropped in. We stopped. There was nothing sinister in all this. There was a row of holes, obviously for a new fence. One was in the middle of what passed for a road. But there we were. Stuck.

The reaction of our four escorts was interesting. Would they come to help us? Scarcely. They stopped and watched with field glasses. I hope they learned something.

First, Horace and I opened the trunk and got out two iced cans of beer. Then we sat in the shade of the car and drank the beer while we considered the problem. We rapidly concluded that there was no problem — so we had another beer. After that we decided we might as well move on, so I got out the jack and jacked up the immersed wheel and stepped back while Horace drove the car off onto level ground. We put away the jack, opened another beer, and went on our way, no thanks to the KGB.

Our travels that day in the direction of Odessa became more complicated. We kept running into military types posted at crossroads, who kept pushing us eastward. Finally, about 10 P.M., we arrived at Drevoi Rog, a far cry from Odessa. But there we were and,

curiously enough, they had a room for us at the station hotel. (Did they know something we didn't?)

The room was fine, but it had no bath. We insisted on bathing. Fine, but this was possible only two nights a week and this was not one of them. I got on my high horse and insisted on a bath. After a great deal of hoo-hah, it was agreed that we could bathe. And (I can't speak for Horace) it turned out to be a heart-warming experience. I went first down to the basement where an elderly man had a wood-fire under a boiler and, in the adjoining room, there was a large, old fashioned bathtub. The tub was filled — no nonsense — by an overhead pipe from the boiler. The attendant added cold water to my taste. Then I got in and, with touching politeness, he asked if I would like him to scrub my back. I said yes, and he washed me and helped me dry off and could not have been pleasanter. When I left, I tried to offer him money, but he refused. He did not, however, complain when I said I had no further use for the bar of soap I had brought and left it beside the tub.

Part 4. Tel Aviv

After departure from Moscow and some months of further Russian language training in Germany, I ended up in June 1956 in Tel Aviv as a member of the political section. Why the Russian language training seemed useful was never terribly clear. Everyone in Israel (or almost everyone) spoke English. Besides, the native language of the East European Israelis (like Ben-Gurion) was usually Polish. Oh, well.

It was clear that relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors were tense. There were constant alarums and border raids. I remember one night in early October, I awakened to shuddering windowpanes. I said to my wife, “That sounds exactly like outgoing 105 howitzer shells (I was in the armored artillery (105) during the war). And so it was. The Israelis had, that evening, taken out a Jordanian border point some eight kilometers (5 miles) east of us. Since we were on the seashore, one can see how constricted Israeli territory was.

From there on things got more tense. And on October 29, we heard on Kol Israel (the voice of Israel) an announcement that Israeli paratroopers had dropped into the Sinai desert to seize the passes leading to the Suez Canal.

There is no reason why I should repeat the history of the war. As far as the Americans at the Embassy were concerned, our life was directed by the Department of State-or perhaps just John Foster Dulles — who immediately took charge.

Anyway, we were told to evacuate all “non-essential” Americans. I put myself first in line, but to no avail. The way it worked out, all dependents were ordered out, as well as all AID personnel. And many Embassy personnel — but not me.

First of all, I was told to accompany the Embassy dependents (including my wife) to Haifa and see them off on a Greek ship to Piraeus. Then I was told to supervise the departure of all other American citizens from Haifa. Well. There were a lot of them. And we were supposed to load them on destroyers the U.S. Navy would bring in to Haifa.

So the next day we documented many American tourists and waited for the ships. We were, of course, down on the docks and, once in a while, the air raid alarms would go off, and we all awaited apprehensively the arrival of the vaunted Egyptian Air Force. Happily, it never arrived.

About four P.M. the first (and last) American destroyer showed up over the horizon, zigzagging at flank speed. He sped in and tied up. We quickly loaded him with hundreds of tourists bound for Cyprus, whether they knew it or not.

I was having coffee with the captain when an argument arose on the deck. It seemed that a dozen or so conservative Orthodox Jews had discovered there was no kosher kitchen on board. They insisted on remaining in Israel. So they did.

After this I asked the captain what his plans were (his anti-aircraft guns were fully manned and weaving about). He said he had no confidence in anyone's submarines and that when he left, it would be zigzag at flank speed.

And so it was. He must have been doing 25 knots when he left the breakwater — at dusk — and he rapidly vanished. I pitied his passengers.

No more American ships came. But that wasn't the end of the evening. Shortly thereafter, the word was spread that an Egyptian destroyer was approaching Haifa. Those of us sitting on hillside terraces leaned back to enjoy the fun and our drinks. Fun soon came. First a half dozen motor torpedo or motor gun boats (Israeli) cranked up and vanished in frothing wakes. Then, a half-dozen vintage British-made Meteor jets went out at Wave-top height. Then — believe this-a French destroyer anchored in the harbor, with lights on and flag flying, opened fire to seaward. He obviously outranged the Egyptian by miles — whether he hit the Egyptian is another question. Anyway, the Egyptian (a former light British destroyer) gave up and was towed into harbor — and presumably is still a (minor) part of the Israeli navy.

With the usual Israeli victory in such wars, the problem retreated to the political level. In this particular case (French and British involvement in the Canal bit aside) what was involved was trying to persuade the Israelis to get out of the Sinai and the Gaza Strip. So the Ambassador was told by John Foster Dulles to go up to Jerusalem to talk to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Golda Meir on this subject. As it turned out, I was his note-taker. So we traveled a good deal. In, incidentally, an antique Cadillac, that could barely make the trip. And, shades of modern terrorism, the chauffeur had a Tommy-gun on the seat beside him. Since the chauffeur was also responsible for maintaining the Cadillac, I had little confidence in the “shootability” of the Thompson gun.

Meetings with Ben-Gurion and Meir were a delight. They were both wonderful people. They never said anything that didn't make sense — more sense, in my view, than Dulles

had to offer. Basically, they took the position that they had to have Egyptian guarantees of the existence of Israel before they gave up the Sinai and (secondarily) the Gaza Strip. A view with which I (personally) fully agreed. Whether when Israel agreed to leave without overt guarantees there had been any private assurances from Dulles, I do not know. Certainly not through the Embassy in Tel Aviv.

As I have observed earlier, languages are not easy for me. Ben-Gurion used to kid me about this. He would ask me how much Hebrew I had learned since we last met. I would say “none” or, perhaps, “shalom.” He would then throw up his arms and say, “If I can learn Greek at age 70 to read the classics in the original, you can learn Hebrew at age 34.” I usually replied that, since all his 16 ministers spoke English, it wasn't necessary to speak Hebrew. (Actually, all his ministers were born, as he was, in Eastern Europe.)

Once, when Ben-Gurion and I were alone in his office-incidentally, a fascinating place — I asked him if he was “religious,” particularly since he had been contributing to a “national” press debate about the eternal question of “what is a Jew?”

I said I really didn't understand the question or the answers. Nor his answer. Nothing loath, I asked him if he was “religious.” He meditated a moment or two and then said, “I cannot be. I am a Marxist. Not, you understand, a Communist. But a socialist, a Marxist. I cannot believe in God.” I said I could understand that since I too did not believe in God. But why, then, did he talk so much about the nature of the Jew and why did he accept the political support of the conservative Jewish parties. He grinned and said the latter was a domestic political question — he needed them — and the former was an international question — he needed money from international — and, particularly, American Jewry if Israel were to survive.

I then asked him when he had last been in a synagogue. He said, “Oh, a week or so ago.” I said, “For religious reasons?” He shook his head. “For political reasons, of course.”

I pursued the question, “Have you in recent years been in a synagogue for religious reasons?” He again shook his head. “Never.”

Ben-Gurion's views on religion were surprising to me only in that he expressed them so bluntly. The Israeli newspapermen I knew in Tel Aviv agreed on practically nothing except the lack of religious belief amongst the Israeli Jewish population. They commonly asserted that at least 85% of Jews in Israel were non-believers. This, of course, vastly complicated the eternally debated question of “What is a Jew?”

In the summer of 1957, Senator Hubert Humphrey visited Israel. I was his escort officer from the Embassy. We wandered allover this rather small country — from Galilee to the Sinai. Finally, we flew, in an Israeli Air Force C-47 to Eilat, on the Gulf of Tiran (or Eilat), then the southern most point in Israel. We visited the mines of Solomon and generally disported ourselves like tourists. Then we headed back to Tel Aviv. We flew low over the desert while experts told us how the ancient inhabitants had lived on irrigated terraces (still visible). Then, abruptly, the weather changed and we encountered a sandstorm. The aircraft was thrown about violently. Dwayne Andreas, a friend of the Senator's and I were sitting opposite him in aluminum bucket seats when a sudden jolt threw us up and down. Our seat became unhooked and Andreas and I were “stabbed” by the seat hooks. Andreas was more severely hurt — in the back. I had just been hooked in the right buttock. But, whatever, there was a lot of blood all over and, of course, medical care when we got back to Lod airport. I still vividly remember that Humphrey gave us a party to remember when we collected, walking wounded and all, in his hotel room at the Dan. A wonderful man.

End of interview